

## Sylene Accuttoroop

Tape 185

Interviewed in April, 1987

Transcribed by Lori G. Robinson, July 2001

The following is an interview conducted by Lapoint sixth grader, Angie Accuttoroop, in 1987. This interview is about economic changes.

Angie Accuttoroop (AA): My name is Angie Accuttoroop. I am a student in Mrs. Squire's class at Lapoint Elementary. I am interviewing Sylene Accuttoroop, who is thirty-seven. My subject is economics. This will be part of an oral history project.

AA: What changes have you witnessed in price?

Sylene Accuttoroop (Sylene): I think the biggest change is that all of the prices have gone up, greatly increased from when I was a little girl. I remember we used to be able to buy a bottle of pop for two cents, and a popsicle was two cents. You could buy a big bag of potato chips for thirty-nine cents, and a box of cereal was about forty-nine cents. You could go to the movie. It cost twenty-five cents to go to the movie, and you could watch it as many times as you wanted. You didn't have to clear the theater. You could stay and watch it two or three times if you wanted to.

I can remember at Penney's, they, I used to like to make curtains and things for my bedroom, and you could buy material for nineteen, twenty-nine, and thirty-nine cents a yard. And I'd save up my money, and when I had enough I'd go buy some of the material at that price.

I used to...remember...when I was a little girl, before I started school, I used to think if my dad had twenty dollars, he'd be the richest man in the whole world. And, one time, a man paid him, and he paid him with a hundred dollar bill, and so my dad brought that home because he wanted his kids to see a hundred dollar bill, and we looked at that before he took it to the bank because a hundred dollar bill was really rare at that time.

My dad used to work for about one hundred dollars a month, and I remember asking him, one time, how much it would cost to get a new car because we always drove cars that were second-hand cars. And he told me that if you had two thousand dollars you could buy any car that you wanted that was brand new, and that's quite a bit less than new cars now that cost about ten thousand dollars. I took dancing lessons when I was little, and it was fifty cents to take a dancing lesson.

AA: What was the one thing you liked to buy that you had enough money for?

Sylene: I always liked to buy material to sew on. I didn't really like candy very much, so I'd always save up for some of that nineteen-cent material. I liked to buy towels, too. I had an old orange crate that was my dresser in the bedroom, and I'd like to watch for a real pretty towel to be on sale, and I'd put the towel on top of my dresser.

AA: Did you like penny candy when you were little and why?

Sylene: No. I didn't like candy. We never ate candy in our... I did like the popsicles that were about two cents, though.

AA: What was it like to go to town when you were a girl?

Sylene: I lived closed enough that we could walk to town, and back then you weren't afraid of people, and my mom would let us go to town when we wanted to. I can remember when I was real small, probably about three or four years old, that I'd go to town with my dad, and we'd go to the drugstore. There used to be these old men that kinda hung around the drugstore, and they'd reach in their pockets, and they'd bring out a whole handful of coins, and then they'd always give the little kids that were at the store a nickel or a dime. One time, this old man asked me, "What are you gonna do with that money?" And I told him I was gonna take it home and put it in my piggy bank. So he reached in his pocket and gave me some more money, and he said, because most kids spend their money, if I was gonna save it, he was gonna give me some more money.

We used to go to town to buy groceries. And we'd shop around, but we didn't really go to town and just look around like we do today, we always only went to town if there was something that we needed. We never went to the big city like Salt Lake or anything, we just always shopped right at home in our little hometown. I remember one time there was a Albertson's grocery store, and one time all of their ice cream freezers quit working, so they moved all the ice cream out on the street and anybody could have free ice cream that wanted it because they couldn't keep it frozen. I remember goin' to town that day.

AA: Did you ever get an allowance? If yes, what did you do to earn it? If not, then what would you do to get money?

Sylene: I didn't ever get an allowance 'til I was about in junior high, and then my dad started giving us, he'd give us a little bit of money just before Christmastime so that we'd have enough to buy Christmas presents with. My dad was a blacksmith, and he used to take me out to his blacksmith shop with him, and there were lots of little pieces of iron that he hadn't used, little scraps. My sister and I used to pick up those scraps and load them up. We'd take those to the junkyard to the scrap iron place, and they would pay us for the scrap metal. That's how we earned money to put in our savings accounts. As I got a little bit older, of course, I babysitted, and I think we got about twenty-five cents an hour for babysitting. And then when I was about in sixth and seventh grade I started cleaning houses for people. And on Saturday I would go clean houses for some of the ladies that were rich enough to hire me, and I'd clean a whole house, do the vacuuming and mop the floors and all the dusting and cleaning the bathrooms, and I usually got about two or three dollars for each house.

AA: How much money did your mom spend on food each week?

Sylene: I don't really know how much she spent. I don't think it would be more than maybe ten

dollars. I know that when I was in college, there were six of us girls in an apartment, and we each put in four dollars a week for food, and we could live on that. So I imagine my mom probably spent maybe ten dollars a week for food when I was a kid, if she spent that much, because she canned a lot and we just ate simple meals. We didn't eat real fancy.

AA: Describe what it was like when you had money to spend when you were a little girl.

Sylene: My parents always taught us to save, so we didn't really spend money very much, but it was always fun to be able to go to town and buy something. I used to like to buy little china figures, little china dolls and china birds. There was a five-and-ten-cent store back then, and I used to save up my money and go see what pretty new china things they had in, and I'd buy some of those.

And I also had a collection of kewpie dolls, little dolls that had really full skirts, and you'd stand 'em on the shelf with the skirt up behind 'em, so it looked like a circle of bright-colored material, and sometimes I'd buy that.

AA: What kind of jobs did you have that was common?

Sylene: For young kids or for everybody?

AA: Well, for young kids.

Sylene: I guess the regular, like babysitting and helping around the house, and then, every year in October we got two weeks off of school for, we called it 'spud vacation,' and you could go out and pick potatoes for the farmers. You put a belt on around your waist that had great big hooks on it. Then you hooked the gunny sack on the two hooks, and you'd go pick potatoes, and you drug the sack between your legs, and you'd fill it up with potatoes, and then when it was full enough, you just stood it up there right in the field. Then, later on, a truck would come by, and other people would pick up the sacks and put them on the truck. You could do that.

You could also weed beets in the summer with a hoe and, before they had machines, that would weed and cultivate them. You had to thin 'em too. They'd plant beets really close together, and then you had to thin 'em, so the beets would have room to grow. You could get about twenty dollars an acre for weeding beets. If you were really fast you could do an acre in a day, but most girls couldn't do quite that much, so it would have been maybe about ten dollars a day you could earn if were doing beets, but that wasn't a year-round thing. It was just seasonal, when the beets were ready and when the potatoes were ready.

AA: Could kids get jobs for money? If so, then what did they do? If not, why couldn't they?

Sylene: Well, I lived in town, but mostly there were a lot of farms around, so most of the kids who lived on farms just worked and helped their parents. Sometimes they didn't actually get paid for it. They just helped their mom and dad. In town, as the kids got older, you could get jobs, oh, like at a drive-in selling hamburgers and some girls got jobs helping in an office after school and a few of 'em would clerk in a store, just kind of the regular jobs that you have in a town.

AA: What kind of money did you have? Is it the same as we have now?

Sylene: It was all United States money, but dollar bills were actually silver certificates, which meant you could present them and get a dollar's worth of silver. Back then, when I was a young girl, gold was thirty-five dollars an ounce, and silver was sixteen dollars an ounce. Gold is probably around four hundred dollars now. It's even been up to eight hundred dollars, but at that time, the money was actually a silver certificate, and the dimes were pure silver, and the quarters were pure silver. Now they have what my cousins call 'sandwich' coins because they have the copper

in the middle of 'em because copper is cheaper, but back then, the money was made out of real silver. We had dollar bills—or, excuse me, silver dollars, and silver fifty cent pieces too.

AA: Is there anything else you'd like to tell us?

Sylene: I can remember, what you call an ice cream bar we used to call a milk nickel because it actually cost a nickel back then, just the on-a-stick ice cream covered with chocolate. You might be interested, when I was a little girl we went to Canada for the winter to take care of my grandfather, who was sick, and back then, it was against the law to make margarine yellow because it looked too much like butter, and they had a law that margarine had to be white so that people could tell if they were buying margarine or butter. You could buy a great big plastic bag of margarine, and it was white, looked just like Crisco, but in the center was a little tiny pill of food coloring. And so you'd let this sack get kind of warm so that you could squeeze the butter inside this sack, and then you'd work it until all the food coloring got through the sack, and I used to want them to wait until I got home from school, so I could play with that sack and make the butter yellow, make the margarine yellow. I can remember I liked to do the butter myself, too. They'd put the cream in a gallon jug with a lid on it, and then I'd just sit there and shake the bottle until it turned to butter. I was really upset when my mother found out she could do it with the Mix Master 'cause I really liked to make the butter myself.

And while we were in Canada, my mother took me to have my hair done at the beauty parlor, and you could have your hair washed and set and dried and combed-out for a dollar.